

# French Call for More U. S. Women Doctors

## Suffragist Unit So Competent That Request Comes for Another to Run Gas Case Hospital

WHEN Dr. Anna Sholly, Dr. Caroline Finley and eleven other "dames Americaines" of the Women's Overseas Hospitals rode up in a camion on March 26 to an evacuation hospital at Chateau Ognon, the French surgeons whose hurry call for help had brought the unit looked up and burst into peals of laughter.

"Mon Dieu! Des femmes!" they roared, half in despair, half in sardonic amusement.

French women do not affect surgery, and this was not the sex that overtaxed medical corps had in mind when it implored aid from the Americans. But making the best of what he supposed was an indifferent bargain the medical commandant of the district put Dr. Sholly, Dr. Finley, Dr. Hunt, Dr. Formad and Dr. Povitsky at what was really nurses' aid work.

They and the nurses who accompanied them went up and down the dusky, pain haunted wards and corridors where the wounded lay so thick one could hardly step without treading on some shattered man. They assisted in operations performed by the light of lanterns carried by gentle old French priests who had become orderlies; they cut the clothes off the patients just arrived; they did in short whatever offered gladly and efficiently and very soon their chance came to them. And when after a week Dr. Finley was in charge of a shock treatment ward and Dr. Sholly had shown what was in her by operating twenty hours without rest and the others had equally redeemed their sex, the men surgeons no longer laughed at the "dames Americaines."

### Asks for Another Unit.

Now, after six months trial of the Women's Overseas Hospitals, the French Government has asked the National Woman Suffrage Association, which sent the unit over and is financing it, to supply immediately a personnel of fifty women, doctors, nurses, nurses' aids, clerks, chauffeurs, &c., to run a 300 bed hospital to be established for the care of gas cases. Mrs. Raymond Brown, who went to France for the suffragists to inspect the units they had sent and report what was needed, came back last week with this official request and is scouring the country now for the very best experts her sex can furnish to enlist for this dangerous work.

"It is dangerous," she told me in her office at national suffrage headquarters, 171 Madison avenue, "dangerous not only because it will probably be near the front, but because the gassed men come in so full of the poisonous stuff, their clothes and their very bodies reeking with it, that the nurses and doctors must breathe in a good deal and the clerks who handle their clothes do, too."

"Well, is it hard to get women for dangerous service?" I asked.

She turned before answering me to speak to a young woman, a nurse, who had come in to volunteer for the Women's Overseas Hospitals. She asked the applicant if she wished to go with the gas contingent, adding that unless she was ready to go into perilous places she must not sign for that.

"But I want dangerous service—that is just what I desire," the girl said eagerly.

### Beg for Places Near the Front.

"That's perfectly typical," Mrs. Brown said after the girl had left. "All our women over there beg for the places nearest the front. Why is it? Well, there's some patriotism in it, and some of the desire for adventure, but mostly it is a wish to test oneself. The French women and the British women have been tested, they've gone through fire and proved that they can stand up to it, but the Americans are just starting."

"Judging from the American nurses on the top floor of the hotel in Paris where I stayed they are getting iron nerves already. There were air raids almost every night—eleven nights out of the thirteen I stayed there—and I always rushed down to the cellar, along with some newspaper men in the hotel. But not those nurses! Through all the diabolical

noise of bombs and sirens and so on they slept calmly and peacefully as infants cradled on their mothers' breasts."

The establishment of this gas hospital marks the beginning of a period of paying much more attention to gas cases and their treatment.

The French will supply the hospital. It is to be ready for the suffrage unit whenever the latter arrives, and Mrs. Brown hopes to start for Europe with the fifty by the end of August. The French War Department will supply some of the equipment, and will maintain the patients, but food and salaries for the fifty of the personnel will come out of the money the American suffragists are raising for this war work.

### Often Pay From Own Pockets.

And it's a safe wager that some of the things that go down the poor parched throats of the gassed men in that hospital when it gets going—some of the nice, cooling dainties—will come out of the pockets of the suffragist nurses. That will be the case if they do as their sisters already there are doing.

"Do you know what I found those girls of ours doing when I reached the evacuation hospital near Compiègne?" Mrs. Brown demanded of me. "I found them doing all sorts of jobs for one another, blacking one another's shoes, manicuring nails, washing hair, to earn a little money with which to buy nourishing goodies for their patients, their poor, brave blessés."

"The French soldier gets, well or sick, his regular ration from the Government. It consists mostly of war bread, meat and red wine. It is what he wants; he would feel much injured if he didn't have his wine; but a man just out of an operation, recovering from grievous wounds, feverish, sick, does need something else."

"Chocolate seems to go to the spot better than anything else over there. I heard a nice story of a Y. M. C. A. man who dropped in on an evacuation hospital equipped with a little spirit stove and some chocolate. It was in the height of a battle—wounded lying along the corridors, some who had not had food or drink for many hours; surgeons operating at top speed."

"The man from the Y. M. C. A. lighted his stove and brewed a huge kettle of steaming chocolate, gave cups to all the wounded, and then penetrated to the operating rooms with a kettleful. One of surgeons, stretching out his arms for a cup of the chocolate, exclaimed as he gulped it down:

### Long to Help the Wounded.

"Now, who the devil thought of doing this? It's the most sensible thing I've seen done yet!"

"Oh, those wounded!" Mrs. Brown went on. "The things I saw make me understand why the doctors and nurses want to be near the front. You long to be where you can help those men."

"I don't know which is the worst, the suffering of the wounded or the suffering and terror of the refugees. I went down to Paris with a trainload of refugees when I left Dr. Finley and the rest of our unit in the evacuation hospital. You know, part of that first group the suffragists sent over is in charge of a station for 3,000 refugees in the south of France, at Labouheyre."

"The civilian work is what the French told us they wanted of us, and that was all that was discussed in the interviews between Dr. Finley and the French High Commissioner André Tardieu, when the latter accepted on behalf of his Government the unit of women which the United States, because of certain army regulations taking no account of women surgeons, had been forced to decline."

"Well, as I say, the French told us they would be very glad to have the Women's Overseas Hospitals come and doctor the villagers, the women and children bereft by the war of medical attendance, and the refugees. They stipulated that if needed our women were to do military duty, but the Americans had no real hope that they would be called for that. They had barely landed in France, however, before at least half the group were whisked off to the evacuation hospital, and soon the scanty letters that came to suffrage headquarters from Dr. Sholly and the rest were reading like this—"



MRS. RAYMOND BROWN.

Mrs. Brown took a sheaf of hasty scrawls from her desk and read me extracts.

"I have just finished nineteen hours of operating. . . . We are working at extra pressure. . . . The sights are pitiful beyond words—mangled men brought in with the trench mud on their boots. . . . The place where we are is beautiful, a wonderful old chateau, and the wild flowers are thick under the trees; but we have no time to enjoy them now. . . . The tension is great. . . ."

"The medicine chef tells us that he wants the 'dames Americaines' permanently here, and we really have an exceptional opportunity, as we get the men straight from the front. All the hospitals to the north have been evacuated, and if the front is pushed forward we go forward too."

"We were the second unit to come here, and at first we had practically nothing few dressings or instruments, but it was wonderful how much could be done with nothing. Now we are getting organized. . . . Bombs drop near us, the German airships sail over us on their way to Paris. . . . Some nurses were badly gassed yesterday at Compiègne. . . ."

"That is Dr. Finley," Mrs. Brown said, putting the letters away. "I was at that hospital the night the last German drive began, and saw the air battles from the windows—bursts of light shooting off high above. Then I went down on the refugee train—the saddest sights!"

The Women's Overseas Hospitals will of course keep up the work among the refugees and villagers, and at Labouheyre, besides the great numbers of refugees brought there, are the people of the surrounding towns, Sabres, Roquefort, Mont-de-Marsan, &c.

The Women's Overseas Hospitals will in addition to taking charge of the new gas hospital continue the military work Dr. Finley and the rest are doing at the front. Indeed, all this is to be enlarged, and Mrs. Brown must mobilize fifteen more women for those two units in addition to the fifty for gas service.

### Names Her Pigs for Germans.

Miss Anne Halsey of Pompton Lakes, N. J., daughter of the former manager of the Sheffield Farms milk company, an expert on baby foods and a famous organizer, is going over in a few days to be house mother at Labouheyre. Miss Halsey is such an earnest anti-German that she names her pigs Hindenburg and Ludendorff and the Crown Prince and Kaiser Bill so that she won't feel bad when they are killed.

Not only are the suffragist surgeons making great strides in the good opinion of French surgeons, but the American army, in defiance of all red tape and official regulations, is taking them to its bosom despite their being of the forbidden

sex. Dr. Alice Gregory has just been sent by Uncle Sam of the U. S. A. to the front to take charge of a dressing station—sent with one nurse and one aid. She had to resign from the civilian unit at Labouheyre to do it. Dr. Marie Formad of Philadelphia will take her place.

There was another good joke on Old General Red Tape at Washington when Dr. Sophie Nevin of Brooklyn, dentist, was commandeered by an army camp at the front. When she arrived with the suffrage unit she was minus instruments with which to pull the aching teeth in the hospital near Compiègne, and the army camp near by had instruments, but no dentist. A dieker was effected whereby Dr. Nevin doctored the soldiers' teeth at the camp three days in the week, and the other three was permitted to take the instruments to the hospital, where on an average thirty-five patients were waiting in her office.

### Kept the Woman Dentist.

When the regular camp dentist arrived Dr. Nevin would have withdrawn gracefully, but the camp commander wouldn't hear of it. No, indeed! He wrote a letter, begging her please to continue her cruel but kind ministrations, and so a lady dentist is among those who are breaking down army regulations.

Not a man is permitted on any of the suff units. Carpenters, plumbers, all are women. They are equal to all emergencies.

Carpenter Florence B. Kober, who appears on the roll as radiographer and nurse's aid, but developed such brilliant strategical ability in bossing German prisoners who were set at building the barracks for the unit at Labouheyre that she was breveted with carpenter's rank, is distinguishing herself. Mrs. Brown says that those Germans, who were rather spoiled by the French—the latter being too good to their prisoners—are certainly earning their rations under Carpenter Kober, who speaks their language and can bawl them out to their complete comprehension if they don't step around as they ought.

The Scottish Women's Hospitals, established by the suffragists of Great Britain, now number nine in France and the Balkans, and not one male person on the staffs of any of them. Mrs. Charles L. Tiffany of the advisory committee of the Women's Overseas Hospitals, and Mrs. Brown and all the rest of the earnest women who are backing this great adventure of the American suffragists in France are determined to equal their British sisters or perish in the attempt.

The gas contingent is expected to be mobilized and to sail in August or early September. The special teaching they will need for treatment of gas victims will be given them in Paris. It is very little, Mrs. Brown says, and the course will require but a week or so.